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CNTA Position Statement on Draft EIS for Yucca Mountain

My name is Mel Buckner and I represent the Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness (CNTA). CNTA is an organization with some 2000 members in South Carolina and Georgia.

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The CNTA would like to go on record as endorsing the conclusions of the draft EIS for Yucca Mountain. The draft EIS is based on two decades of extensive site evaluations, which demonstrate that Yucca Mountain is a suitable site for a geologic repository. In fact, Yucca Mountain is likely the most studied piece of ground on earth and further delays in the schedule, which has already been extended a number of times, would not provide any additional technical insights regarding suitability.

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Also, we endorse the current plan to provide the ability to retrieve spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste for at least 100 years and possibly as long as 300 years to give additional assurance that the environment and the public will be protected. In addition, this measure provides the opportunity to employ new technologies that may be developed during this period to further reduce the radiotoxicity of the waste as well as to efficiently recover the energy value. Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico has fostered a new, national dialogue on the full range of nuclear technologies and several efforts have been initiated which have the potential to enhance the integrity of the repository. These technologies should be fully evaluated and utilized if they are shown to provide societal benefits, to be cost effective and to enhance acceptance of the geologic repository for ultimate disposal of these materials.

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The CNTA was founded in 1992 in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) of South Carolina and Georgia. CNTA's mission is to provide education about the benefits of nuclear energy and the myths related to this important energy source. CNTA is vitally concerned about the problem of nuclear waste because approximately 10% of the current interim storage locations (6 nuclear power stations and the Savannah River Site) are within these two states. While this interim storage is acceptable for the short-term, a long-term solution has been expected for some time. Additionally, the continuing lack of resolution of the issue of nuclear waste is a waste of taxpayers' money.

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Methods for disposal of radioactive waste have been studied since the late 1950s when the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recommended that the best option for protecting the environment and the public was to dispose of radioactive waste in rock deep underground. The draft EIS indicates that no showstoppers have been identified and it is prudent to move forward with the construction and commissioning of the repository, which will provide one sure path to close the nuclear fuel cycle. Certainly within this two-state area, transportation of nuclear waste is also a key concern, but experience at the Savannah River Site indicates that this can be dealt with safely. The draft EIS provides further assurance that the nuclear industry has demonstrated an excellent record in transporting spent nuclear fuel and that these practices will be relied upon heavily.

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4 The problem of nuclear waste has been an open issue in our country for nearly half a
century and a significant step in solving the problem is now well in hand. Maintaining
the current schedule for opening the geologic repository at Yucca Mountain should be a
national priority. CNTA supports the proposed actions set forth in the draft EIS and the
recent viability assessment performed by the Department of Energy. With these actions
and continued funding by Congress, we can avoid near term impacts on the ability of
5 nuclear reactors to provide clean energy and assure that the legacy of nuclear waste will
not be left to future generations. In addition, CNTA is strongly supportive of the nuclear
technology initiatives that have been established under Senator Pete Domenici's
leadership. These initiatives have the potential to reduce or perhaps eliminate the need
for geologic repository storage capacity beyond that provided by Yucca Mountain and to
reduce the long-term integrity requirements for geologic storage.

6 CNTA would also like to recommend that NAS be requested to revisit the issue of
radioactive waste disposal before the EIS is finalized. The study should focus on the
criteria set forth in the original recommendation and verify that Yucca Mountain meets
those requirements. The results of this evaluation should expedite the EIS process by
providing additional assurance to the public and elected officials that Yucca Mountain is
a viable site for disposal of radioactive waste in rock deep underground.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.